



# Interpersonal Communication Competence & Attachment Styles in Pre-Licensure Nurses

## A Descriptive Pilot Study

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### INTRODUCTION

Nursing turnover, defined as nurses leaving or transferring positions for voluntary or involuntary reasons is estimated between 17-27% for newly licensed registered nurses<sup>1,2</sup>. Evidence suggests the first year of practice is highly stressful for new nurses<sup>3</sup> with communication inadequacies and lack of support being contributing factors.<sup>4</sup> Interpersonal communication is essential for the practice of safe, quality patient care. Research supports a correlation between interpersonal communication competence, adult attachment styles, and perceived social support.<sup>5</sup>

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this descriptive pilot study was to describe the interpersonal communication competence levels and adult attachment styles in pre-licensure nurses.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the levels of interpersonal communication competence in pre-licensure nurses?
2. What are the attachment styles of pre-licensure nurses?

### METHODS

#### Sample

- Convenience sample (n=91)
- Final semester baccalaureate nursing students

#### Setting:

- University in midwestern United States

#### Data Collection

REDCap Survey link emailed to participants including:

- Demographic Survey
- Interpersonal Communication Competence (ICC) Scale<sup>6</sup>
  - 30 item self report scale (Cronbach Alpha .86)
- Experiences in Close Relationships Short Form Scale (ECR-S)<sup>7</sup>
  - 12 item Likert Scale measuring Anxiety & Avoidance Attachment Styles

#### Data Analysis

- Descriptive statistics for demographic data & Interpersonal Communication Competence
- Recoding for ECR-S for Anxiety & Avoidance
- Summation of scores for Secure vs. Insecure attachment styles

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### RESULTS

#### Demographic Data

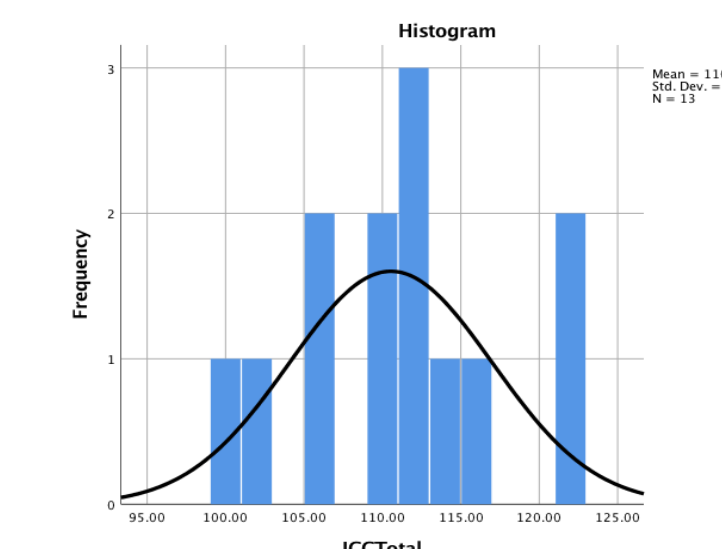
Survey response rate 14% (n=13)

Demographic Data	% (n)
<b>Age Range</b>	
18-22	31% (n=4)
23-30	69% (n=9)
<b>Race</b>	
White	92% (n=12)
Black	8% (n=1)
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	15% (n=2)
Female	85% (n=11)
<b>Educational Track</b>	
Traditional	77% (n=10)
Accelerated	23% (n=3)
<b>Prior Healthcare Experience</b>	39% (n=5)

#### Interpersonal Communication Competence

Mean	110.58
Standard Deviation	6.48
Range	100-121

(n=12) Scale Range-Low 95-125 High



#### Secure vs Insecure in Anxiety & Avoidance Subscale

Score	Anxiety (n=13)	Avoidance (n=12)
Secure <19	15% (n=2)	50% (n=6)
Neutral 19-29	54% (n=7)	42% (n=5)
Insecure >30	31% (n=4)	8% (n=1)

Minimum Score 7 (low= secure)  
Maximum Score 42 (high= insecure)

### DISCUSSION

- Evidence supports 60% of individuals identify as having secure attachment style, 20% anxious & 20% avoidant.<sup>8</sup>
- 31% (n=4) of participants in this study identified as insecure/anxious attachment styles contributing to fear of interpersonal rejection, excessive need for approval & distress when individuals are unavailable.<sup>7</sup>
- Interpersonal Communication Competence was normally distributed in pre-licensure nurses & expected based on prior health care experience & clinical experience in the academic setting.
- Further research is warranted to determine if there is a correlation between insecure attachment styles, interpersonal communication competence levels and perceived support in new nurses.
- Small sample size limited the findings of this study but follow up with larger samples, longitudinal data, and pre/post test design could support how attachment styles in new nurses impacts stress, communication and perceived support during transition to practice thus impacting turnover.

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